REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action dated January 16, 2003. The Examiner therein rejected claims 1-32. Applicants herein amend claims 1, 14, 15, 17 and 32. Claims 1-32 are thus pending.

Reconsideration of these pending claims is respectfully requested.

Oath / Declaration

The Examiner kindly requests that Applicants confirm inventorship of this application in view of certain misspellings of inventor names. Applicants however previously corrected the names of these inventors (Emir Gurer and Ted C. Bettes) on the filed corrected filing receipt (copy attached).

Priority

Applicants acknowledge the comments made by the Examiner concerning priority. Applicants nonetheless reserve their right to claim priority to subject matter disclosed in earlier referenced patent applications upon presentation of claims which may be examined in the future.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112

The Examiner rejects claim 32 in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Currently amended claim 32 now recites the limitation "a" humid gas to address concerns of sufficient antecedent basis. Allowance of this claim is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30-32, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mandal et al (US Patent No. 6,238,735) in view of Takeshita et al (US Patent 6,248,168).

As described by independent claim 1, the current invention provides a method of coating a surface of a substrate with a polymer solution. Among the other steps recited in this claim as amended herein, the solvent vapor concentration of a control gas is controlled between approximately 50%-80% (saturation).

The Examiner concedes that Mandal is not specific with respect to the desired concentration of the solvent vapor, but that Takeshita discloses that "the concentration of the solvent in the gas is preferably 100%." [Office Action, p.6.] "[T]he concentration of the solvent

component is controlled to be the saturated concentration (100%)" and this state is maintained until gelling treatment of the coated film is completed. [Takeshita, col.19, ln.67 – col.20, ln.2.] But as noted in Takeshita, if "the average concentration of the solvent in the gas is higher than the saturated vapor pressure, there is a problem that the vapor condenses on the substrate or on the wall of the treatment chamber, the condensation on the substrate induces deterioration of the film quality, and the condensation on the wall of the treatment chamber tends to cause contamination of the apparatus or re-sticking on the substrate." [Id. at col.4, ln.66 – col.5, ln.6.]

Meanwhile, as reflected in presently amended claim 1, the solvent vapor concentration of the control gas is controlled within the range of approximately 50%-80% (saturation) during the coating process of a polymer solution onto the substrate surface within the housing. The solvent vapor concentration of the control gas does not reach saturation in which case there may be a problem with allowing vapor to condense onto the substrate or other associated issues. Accordingly, the references cited by the Examiner fail to disclose or suggest the methods as claimed herein.

The Examiner further rejects claims 2-13, 15-17, 19-21, 23-25, and 27-29 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mandal in view of Takeshita as applied to claims 1, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30-32 above, and further in view of Chun et al (US Patent No. 6,191,053).

In view of the aforementioned remarks and discussion relating to independent claim 1, allowance of this and other claims dependent thereon is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that the application is in condition for allowance and respectfully request the Examiner to expedite this matter so that a patent may issue. In the event there are any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 5/22/03

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